Location recce checklist

What to check on a site visit, in the order that stops a shoot being cancelled on the morning.

A starting template, not legal advice. Check it suits your production, and take advice for anything unusual.

A recce answers one question: can we shoot what the shot list says, here, on the day? Walk the site with the list in hand, and answer each line. Anything you cannot answer is a question to send to the owner before you commit. The safety checks here do not replace a risk assessment, which a competent person must make for the actual job.

Site details

Location name	*[[The name the site is known by]]*
Address	*[[Full address, with the entrance to use]]*
Owner or authorised occupier	*[[Legal name, not a member of staff on site]]*
Contact on the day	*[[Name and phone]]*
Date and time of visit	*[[Visit at the time you plan to shoot]]*
Visited by	*[[Name]]*
Planned shoot date and time of day	*[[Date, and the time of day]]*

1. Permission first

Item	Yes	No	Check	Notes
Owner or authorised occupier identified *Get the answer from the person who can give permission.*	☐	☐	☐	
Written permission or location agreement in place *It covers dates, areas, fees, insurance and what happens if the shoot is cancelled.*	☐	☐	☐	
Public land: council or highway permit checked *Ask the council or highway authority whether a permit is needed.*	☐	☐	☐	
Photographs taken and dated, and sent to the crew	☐	☐	☐	

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2. Access and parking

Item	Yes	No	Check	Notes
Can the van reach the location, and how close can it stop?	☐	☐	☐	
How far is the walk from the van to the set, with cases? *Measure it, rather than guessing.*	☐	☐	☐	
Parking for the crew and the talent, and is it free?	☐	☐	☐	
Any height, width or weight limits on the route in?	☐	☐	☐	

3. Power and light

Item	Yes	No	Check	Notes
Nearest power supply shown by the owner and runs the planned kit *Do not guess from a socket on the wall.*	☐	☐	☐	
Light direction noted at the planned time of day *Check when the sun is in the shot.*	☐	☐	☐	
Reflections, shade and any light that will change during the day	☐	☐	☐	

4. Sound

Item	Yes	No	Check	Notes
Visited at the time of day you plan to shoot *Traffic, school runs and the sun change the picture and the sound.*	☐	☐	☐	
Traffic, aircraft, machinery, pumps, birds, dogs and church bells listened for	☐	☐	☐	
Hard surfaces that will echo noted	☐	☐	☐	
Controlled noise on the day checked *Works projects and road closures.*	☐	☐	☐	

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5. Safety

Item	Yes	No	Check	Notes
Uneven ground, steps, water, slopes and overhead cables noted	☐	☐	☐	
Nearest toilet, first aid point and shelter from the rain found	☐	☐	☐	
Route to hospital identified, and phone signal noted for the call sheet	☐	☐	☐	

6. Plan B

Item	Yes	No	Check	Notes
An indoor or second location written down *The studio or location guide sets out when a stage is the better answer.*	☐	☐	☐	

Worked example

A recce for an interview in a farm barn shows a good view and a good window of light.

At the visit the tractor work next door is the only sound on the day, and the owner confirms it runs from nine until noon. The interview moves to the afternoon, the agreement notes the working hours, and the call sheet lists the nearest hospital.

Common mistakes

- **Checking for the view only.** A site can look right and still fail on access, power or noise.
- **Visiting at the wrong time.** A quiet Sunday morning tells you nothing about a Tuesday school run.
- **Trusting a verbal yes.** Get the permission in writing, from the person who can give it.
- **No photographs or measurements.** Take them, date them and send them to the crew.
- **No plan B.** Write down an indoor or a second location before you need one.

Sign-off

Recce carried out by and date	
Go, no go, or go with changes	
Plan B location	
Sent to the crew on	

Sources named in the guide: Sprintlaw, Legal checklist for filming in the UK (sprintlaw.co.uk); Filming in England, guide for property owners on location agreements.

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